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WORLD-POLITICS.

LONDON : BERLIN.

LONDON, May, 1908.

THE death of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came home to all Englishmen with a curious sense of personal loss. Curious, because only a very few years ago "C-B" was the most execrated man by a certain school of opinion in the country, and the idea that his passing would be felt by men of all parties as a national loss and would touch the emotions of his fellow countrymen with something of a fireside intimacy would have seemed almost fantastic. I was remarking in one of these letters only a few months ago that "C-B's" illness surprised the country into consciousness of how greatly it had grown to like him, and the Liberal party into a full realization of how much it owed to him. The last two years of his life raised "C-B" above the mists of obloquy and detraction and enabled the nation almost for the first time to see him as he really was; and I cannot away with the impression that the very genuine and sincere grief evoked by his resignation and subsequent death was intensified by the feeling that in the past he had not always had fair play, and that some reparation was due to him for the injustices and misunderstandings of former years. Public life seems sensibly less gracious, now that he is gone. It would, indeed, be a piece of flattery that his own good sense and homely shrewdness would have been the first to repudiate to pretend that he reached the level of greatness. But he succeeded where many great men might easily have failed. His very lack of the qualities that go with the highest kind of leadership was in a way an assistance to him. His simple fortitude in the black years of dissension and defeat, his mellowness, sanity and good humor in the hardly less difficult moment of overwhelming victory, were invaluable assets to the cause of Liberalism. It was

not, indeed, "C-B" who reunited the Liberal party; it was Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain. But it was very largely owing to "C-B's" unwavering constancy that such a thing as a Liberal party survived at all. He was for a long while regarded as the white elephant of his party; he proved to be the instrument of its salvation. He had the rare art of governing through the affections and it enabled him, though not a man of conspicuous abilities, to preside over and, to an extent that even now is only half suspected, to direct the greatest outburst of legislative energy that this country has known. No man ever proved more adroit in disentangling the recurrent crises of politics; to no man did a discordant and impetuous following ever refer its disputes with a more implicit confidence in his fairness and good feeling. He was the first Prime Minister who did not belong to, and had little sympathy or affiliation with, "the governing class"; and the distinction enabled him to keep in touch and understanding with the newer movements long past the age when most Liberals are Whigs and most Whigs Conservatives.

The country has now had some weeks in which to adjust itself to the change in the Premiership and to form its opinion on the personnel of the new Cabinet. It is generally admitted that Mr. Asquith has acquitted himself admirably. Less popular and ingratiating than his predecessor, of a harder and more self-contained temperament, he is unquestionably "C-B's" superior in intellect, driving power, eloquence and the primal fighting qualities. His speeches since his accession have been, as all his speeches are, singularly virile, clean-cut and heartening. He has already reanimated the Liberal party. Men may criticise his manner, may wish that he showed a rather more genial side to the world, may contrast his somewhat metallic disposition with "C-B's" coaxing flexibility. But they are conscious at the same time that they have in him a leader cool and skilful in strategy, brilliant on the field of battle, purposeful and sagacious in all his movements, always supremely sure of himself, always convinced that there is no better method of political defence than a vigorous and resolute attack. His reorganization of the Cabinet, even by the acknowledgment of its opponents, has visibly strengthened it. Some of the less satisfactory members of the "C-B" ministry have been got rid of; new and promising blood has been introduced; the promotions, with perhaps one exception,

have appealed to the business sense of the nation; and everybody recognizes that the country gains by the closer correspondence that is now established between the views of the Prime Minister and those of his Foreign Secretary. I cannot, perhaps, give a better idea of the new Cabinet than by saying that, on the whole, it is the sort of Cabinet that Mr. Roosevelt would have formed had he been in Mr. Asquith's place. Moreover, it is felt that the moment of its birth is opportune and that a new Ministry with a new leader may be able to inherit the successes, but not the failures, of the "C-B" Government; may make concessions that would have been impossible to its predecessor; may alter the general scheme of Liberal tactics at this point and at that, and, by the interest it arouses and by its comparative freedom in the choice of routes to its goal, may succeed in stemming the obvious reaction that was setting in against the Ministerial policies.

The reality of that reaction is not to be disputed. Every by-election shows either a Unionist gain or a greatly diminished Liberal vote. The Unionists are claiming that there is not to-day a single seat which was won from them in 1906 which has not already been morally regained. It is an exaggerated claim, but the facts support a good part of it. In the six contested by-elections that have been held this year the Unionist vote has increased by 11,122 and the Liberal vote has decreased by 6,331. The defeat of Mr. Winston Churchill in Northwest Manchester was, on any hypothesis, a staggering blow for Liberalism. If there is one city in Great Britain more bound up by tradition with Free Trade than another, that city is Manchester. If there is any division in Manchester which Free Traders might have looked upon as more deeply committed to their cause than another, that division is the Northwest division. Yet in that city and in that division, with a brilliant and captivating candidate, just appointed to the Presidency of the Board of Trade—an office that must always peculiarly appeal to a commercial constituency—and opposed by a candidate of no conspicuous ability, their majority of over twelve hundred was wiped out; they were not merely defeated, but smashed. It is true that the campaign was complicated by many issues, that the Unionist candidate did all he could to keep Tariff Reform in the background, and that the local Catholics revolted from the Government on grounds, not of fiscal, but of educational policy. But I do not know that

from the Liberal standpoint all this is much of a consolation. If they argue that the Unionist victory of a few weeks ago was not won on the specific and solitary issue of Tariff Reform, the reply is that the Liberal victory of 1906 was not won on the specific and solitary issue of Free Trade. In both cases the pronouncement of the constituency was against the general record of the Government. An absolutely plain and isolated issue there cannot be without the referendum. Liberals in 1906 claimed for Free Trade a victory that was largely won by the Chinese Labor question, by the Education Act of 1902, by the Taff Vale decision and by the popular irritation against the personnel and conduct of the last two years of the Balfour Ministry. They cannot, therefore, complain if their opponents in 1908 claim for Tariff Reform a victory that was largely won on other than fiscal issues. They comfort themselves by assuming that at the next general election, when a vote against Free Trade will have a far greater significance and will amount to a mandate to set up a Protective Tariff, Northwest Manchester will return to the Free Trade fold. But that assumption is merely a speculation on a series of possible, but by no means inevitable, contingencies. Meanwhile Mr. Churchill's defeat, the further reverses that may have to be chronicled within the next few weeks, and the emphatic testimony of the decline in the Liberal vote have forced the Government to realize that it has already reached the crisis of its fate.

What are the causes of the reaction? How is it that singularly able Ministry, which has conducted foreign and colonial affairs with unsurpassable success, which has introduced and passed many admirable measures of social and commercial reform, and which has held office for less than thirty months, should now find itself in the trough of popular disfavor? The first explanation I would offer is that the Government has become tainted in the minds of a great many people, particularly of the middle-class, with Socialism. A few weeks ago a bill was brought forward in the House of Commons and one hundred and sixteen Liberal members voted for it, providing that, whenever a working-man had registered himself as unemployed, it should be the duty of a specially created local authority either to provide him with remunerative work or to maintain him and his family until work could be found. It is true that the Government refused in any way to support so monstrous and revolutionary a measure.

But the mere fact that it could be introduced and that so many Liberals, in spite of the attitude of their official leaders, could be found to vote for it, was sufficient to fill the average man with some definite apprehensions. Then, again, it will be remembered that last autumn, for the first time in English history, a candidate who ran as an avowed Socialist was elected to the House of Commons. The Tories have naturally made an immense amount of capital out of that fact. They have used it to promote a scare about property. The English middle-classes are as susceptible to scares about property as to scares about Ritualism. I do not say that they are as yet in a state of alarm, still less of panic. But they are fidgety with a vague, but potent, uneasiness —the sort of uneasiness that may lead them, unless it is dispelled, to vote blindly for the Tories as the “saviors of society.”

Within the last few months, moreover, there has been an all-round increase in the cost of living. This tells against a Government in any country. It tells particularly against the Liberal Government in England because the essence of the Free Trade case is cheap food. No intelligent man, of course, holds the Liberal Government or Liberal policy responsible for the rise in the price of bread or can for a moment be imposed upon by the fallacy that because bread is dearer therefore Free Trade is unsound. But for electioneering purposes the increased cost of provisions has been sufficiently effective and the Tariff Reformers have diligently exploited it. Thus both the middle and the working class have to some extent been turned against the Government. It is the fortune of politics and there is nobody to be blamed for it. Certain measures on the Liberal programme have, however, added to the reaction. The Eight Hours Bill for miners, for example, has been opposed, and, so far as I can judge, in no partisan spirit and on not very unreasonable grounds, by a large number of industrial interests as involving a certain increase in the price of coal; and the price of coal, I need hardly say, is a matter that interests in addition every householder in the country.

Then, too, the Licensing Bill, with which I dealt at length in my last communication, has committed the Government to a fight for its life with the most powerful, the wealthiest and the best organized trade in England. The brewers are assailing it with unparalleled vehemence as at once an attack upon prop-

erty and destined to increase the cost of the working-man's beer. I believe myself that the Government will triumph and that the principle of its bill will be accepted by both Houses of Parliament. But in the mean time the fight against it is being waged with incredible fury and with every ingenious weapon of misrepresentation and terrorism.

The Unionist Free Traders, again, who supported the Liberals at the last election, but who are Tories at heart, feel that their allegiance has been severely strained by the radicalism of the Government's policy, especially by the Old Age Pensions project and by such measures as the miners' Eight Hours Bill and the feeding of school children at the public expense. They complain bitterly that the Government has forgotten that it was elected to act as the trustee for Free Trade, and is hurrying the country into a multitude of social reforms the mere financing of which will make Protection inevitable. The Liberals, in addition, have not developed their Parliamentary tactics with either judgment or foresight. Their attack upon the House of Lords has up to now palpably failed. Moreover, they have bewildered the country by the numbers and magnitude of the measures they have proposed. The people have no appetite for more than one first-class measure at a time. The Government has tried to thrust three or four down their throats simultaneously. The result is confusion, congestion, repletion and, finally, revolt. And on the top of all this the boom in trade has already slackened and shows signs of collapsing, while the Tariff Reformers have plucked up heart and are now conducting a far more extensive and effective propaganda in the constituencies than at any time since the opening months of the fiscal controversy five years ago.

Such I believe to be the chief causes of the present reaction against the Liberal policy. It is a matter of more difficulty to determine whether they are temporary causes or permanent, whether they are now at the height of their influence or whether the future is likely to intensify them. My own impression is that the worst of the Government's trials will very soon be over, and that good courage now and good strategy hereafter will enable the Liberals to concentrate all their forces upon the fiscal issue at the next general election. The immediate necessity of their situation is to get the Licensing Bill passed. I believe they will succeed in doing so.

BERLIN, May, 1908.

THE Polish Expropriation Bill has now become law, and authorizes the Prussian Government compulsorily to acquire land in the Polish provinces of Posen and West Prussia for the creation of German settlements. The expenditure involved will amount to nearly \$100,000,000. The policy which this law represents was initiated more than twenty years ago, and during this period millions of money have been sunk in the purchase of land in the Polish districts which is now as far as possible to be parcelled out among German "colonists." This Prussian law is to be supplemented by an act of Imperial legislation which is designed absolutely to prohibit the use of any but the German language at public meetings after the lapse of twenty years. The French, Danish, and Polish languages and innumerable dialects are to come under the ban, and, in the words of a popular German journal, "in 1928 Germany is to become a 'national' State—by proclamation."

The purpose and effect of this legislation is plain. Its essentially political character cannot be argued out of existence by means of constitutional sophistries and false analogies. Of its expediency from the point of view of domestic harmony and social progress the Prussian Government itself claims to be the best judge. The Prussian Constitution recognizes the principle of expropriation as a legitimate instrument for promoting the "public interest," but even those who drew up this charter scarcely dreamed that upon the strength of this recognition a claim to curtail the rights of one-seventh of the population would be set up. During the course of the controversy over the Expropriation Bill repeated allusion has been made by the Prussian Government to the situation in Ireland, which has been boldly adduced as furnishing a correct and complete analogy for Prussia's policy towards her Polish subjects. Even less to the point have been the frequent and triumphant references to the experiment in the direction of land nationalization represented by the English Small Holdings Act, which was passed by the House of Commons last year, and provides for the compulsory purchase, in certain circumstances, of land for allotment to local applicants. After many vicissitudes the Polish Expropriation Bill has become law. The Poles themselves, in obedience to the counsels of the Catholic clergy and of their political organizations, have so far

maintained an attitude of reserve towards the measure now that it has become an accomplished fact. Against the armed forces of the Prussian Government the Poles are powerless. There is an uncomfortable expectation, however, that when once the act is set in motion they will oppose to the measure a passive resistance similar to that which kept the Polish provinces in a ferment last year, when the children in the Polish elementary schools organized a general strike as a protest against the prohibition of religious instruction in their mother tongue.

Beyond Berlin, the Mecca of so many Americans, few travellers ever care to venture. There is little to attract the curious further east. West and East Prussia and Posen lie beyond Berlin, and in these provinces the views and conditions of life are worlds removed from the metropolitan airs and graces of the German capital. The prevailing atmosphere is still more alien to the complacent friendliness of Frankfurt and Cologne, or the tolerant familiarity of South Germany. The continuity of this preponderatingly agricultural region, which is divided, but not separated, from the Russian Polish provinces by an artificial political frontier, is broken only by the furnaces and factories of the Silesian industrial *enclave*. The sparsely scattered population consists of a curious medley of Poles, Masurians, Lithuanians and Jews, who furnish a considerable contingent of the endless stream of emigrants which year after year pours into the United States. The Protestants are numbered by the Prussian crown among its loyal subjects, while the Catholic elements are regarded with suspicion. These motley creeds and nationalities are dominated by the type of Prussian-German whom good but untravelled Frenchmen still regard as their *bête noire*. It is this unexplored region, merging almost imperceptibly into the Russian landscape further east, that supplies the driving-power and reserves of labor for all Germany, and it is the policy of Prussia to purge her eastern marches of the elements which, in the event of war, might prove a source of weakness. The argument that the millions of money now being spent upon the Germanization of Poland might more profitably be devoted to additional armaments is in itself unanswerable. But from the point of view of the maintenance of Prussian hegemony the purpose served would not be the same. The straggling districts in which the Poles predominate overlap on to the Russian territory to the east, and to the south they blot

out, as far as speech and customs are concerned, the Austrian frontier-line. Arbitrarily divided upon grounds of political expediency, the Poles owe nominal allegiance to three empires, but nevertheless remain united in sentiment. While the Russian Poles, hemmed in on two sides, are still powerless to control their own destinies, the Austrian Poles have successfully asserted their claim to a considerable share in the conduct of affairs in the Dual Monarchy, and the fate of the Poles in Prussia has not failed to excite loud protests in the Austrian Chamber. Notwithstanding the close and intimate relations which Germany aspires to maintain with both her neighbor and her ally, protests and plaints alike have passed unheeded by Prince von Bülow, who, in his various speeches on the Expropriation Bill, had discounted them beforehand. But any wholesale eviction or emigration of the Poles from the Prussian provinces can only help to swell the disaffected elements among Russia's Polish subjects, and to inflame Slav passions against German influence in Austria. While Russia cannot contemplate with equanimity an eventuality of this kind, Germany herself can scarcely afford at the same time to weaken the stability of her alliance with Austria. Nevertheless, Prince von Bülow professes to be indifferent to the opinion not only of Germany's friends and neighbors, but of the world at large, and appeals to his countrymen to be guided solely by the "defiant instinct of self-preservation."

Almost at the same moment at which the German Imperial Chancellor brushed aside as negligible the opinion of the outside world, inspired pens were set in motion in order to impress upon the American public the transparent legitimacy of "German expansion." In presence of Prince von Bülow's admonitions, it passes the comprehension of plain minds to understand what possible interest the American public could be conceived to feel in German policy with regard to Belgium and the Netherlands. It would be foolish to suppose that the Imperial Chancellor invites foreign public opinion with regard to his policy for the mere pleasure of neglecting it. In the absence of more satisfactory explanations, it is possible that the opinion thus invited was to be elicited for the benefit and guidance not of the German people, but of some third party. For example, it may be that in view of the North Sea negotiations, the German Government desired indirectly to inspire confidence in the other States which

are concerned in the agreement in that sphere, without, however, unduly emphasizing the value which, as the proceedings with regard to the laws and usages of naval warfare at last year's Hague Conference sufficiently indicated, a neutral Belgium and Holland would possess for Germany in time of war.

These diplomatic excursions into print may prove to be the precursors of more systematic attempts on the part of authorized interpreters of German policy to influence opinion abroad. The existence of a German semi-official telegraph agency permits of the rapid dissemination of the written and spoken word, and whatever the subject—whether it be Macedonia or the North Sea littoral—the German public is given an early opportunity of judging for itself of the activity of its accredited representatives. During the recent debates on the Foreign Office estimates in the Reichstag the leader of the National Liberals, Herr Bassermann, urged the German Government to find ways and means of exerting greater influence upon the foreign press. Whether, in obedience to the "defiant instinct of self-preservation," but in contravention of his other principles, the Imperial Chancellor will avail himself of this suggestion remains to be seen. Another deputy, who also advocated the judicious manufacture of pro-German opinion abroad, warned Prince von Bülow that he would have to walk delicately if he desired to influence the foreign press without arousing its suspicions. An irresponsible politician like Herr Bassermann, who aspires to sit, so to speak, on the cross benches and who, upon the strength of a dilettante acquaintance with foreign politics, reviews mankind from China to Peru in a two hours' speech in the Reichstag, cannot be expected to appreciate the position of a responsible journalist. It is possible that he had heard the story about Napoleon, who, when he was asked by one of his Ministers how he had succeeded in converting a German journalist from a rabid opponent into an enthusiastic admirer, replied:

"If you ever have anything to do with people of that sort and want them to become your friends, do not put yourself to any expense, but wait for a favorable opportunity until you can speak to them yourself. Then just praise their talents, and their newspaper, and so on. If you want to do more, offer them a pinch of snuff; if they are very scrupulous, and if you want to make quite sure of them, give them the snuff-box, snuff and all into the bargain. I give you my word that you will be sure of them then."

Whether or not Herr Bassermann had this story in mind when he made his suggestion, he has subsequently explained that what he really meant was, not that foreign journalists should be "bribed" (!), but that the "younger attachés" in the German diplomatic service ought to try and get into touch with the more important newspapers in the countries in which they are stationed. This ingenuous proposal will be received with a broad grin, especially by the "younger attachés."

The drawbacks of the system upon which German foreign policy is conducted have been even more strikingly exemplified by a recent incident in which American interests were closely concerned. During the latter part of last year the prospect of Mr. Charlemagne Tower's retirement from the post of American Ambassador in Berlin became definite. The American Minister at the Hague, Dr. D. J. Hill, was designated as his successor and was duly accepted by the German Government, and his appointment was recorded in the Gotha Almanac for 1908. Suddenly, towards the close of the Berlin season, it was stated that the German Government had expressed doubts as to the suitability of Dr. Hill for the post. These first reports were subsequently mitigated by a semi-official announcement to the effect that after the confirmation of Dr. Hill's appointment the German Government was assailed by an apprehension that after all the Ambassador-designate "might not feel comfortable" in Berlin. Another authorized version of the incident spoke of "objections" on the part of the Emperor, which, according to this account, were inspired by solicitude for the United States and by anxiety that America should be fittingly represented in Germany. The affair is obviously too delicate to be discussed in cold print; but it may be indicated that neither of these two versions is complete, and it may be added that Prince von Bülow, according to the likeliest account, knew little or nothing of what had taken place until after the event. For days after the incident extracts from the American press were busily transmitted to Berlin purporting to show that the relations between Germany and the United States had not suffered in consequence. To the dispassionate observer these utterances seemed to protest too much. The German comic press, which holds nobody, not even a diplomatist, sacred, has seized upon the incident with avidity. "*Tower versus Power*" is the punning legend borne by a picture which

represents the outgoing Ambassador leaving his post in a sort of pantomime fairy-coach, escorted by cavalry and police, while his successor is seen painfully approaching in the background, grasping a reading-lamp in one hand and hauling a barrow-load of books with the other. The rough-and-ready moral which the picture is intended to convey will not be lost upon those whom it most concerns. But it is neither for the German Government nor the German comic press to play the part of keeper of the American conscience.

The end of Prince von Bülow's *régime* may be precipitated by a Parliamentary crisis, and even in the natural order of events it cannot be indefinitely postponed. But there are many Germans who reflect that a change in the Chancellorship will not necessarily be for the better. Secretly it is hoped, even by men of the stamp of Herr Bassermann, that in time the Reichstag will vindicate its right to control German foreign policy by means of a Government which shall be responsible to Parliament instead of merely being the instrument of a higher initiative. But this consummation is not yet in sight. In the future as in the past, however, whatever the Chancellor or any one else in Germany may affect to think, German like all other foreign policy will always have to be submitted to the judgment of the world. Even in the domestic sphere no responsible minister will wantonly embark upon a course of action which is calculated to diminish the credit of his country in the eyes of the world, by embarrassing those who wish it well, or by affording opportunities for criticism to its rivals. As the example of Germany herself has shown, no Power can afford to neglect the "political *imponderabilia*," which, in the words of Bismarck, "often exert an influence more powerful than that of mighty armies or boundless wealth, or even than the dictates of direct and material interests."